

March 18, 2002



William F. Caton  
Acting Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th St., SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: MM Docket Nos. 01-235, 96-197

Dear Mr. Caton:

On Friday, March 15, 2002, the AFL-CIO sponsored a policy briefing entitled, "Why Diversity and Competition in News Reporting Matters: the Case for Retention of the FCC Newspaper/Broadcast Ownership Rule." The briefing was evaluated by the FCC Office of General Counsel, and determined to be a "widely-attended" event, such that FCC personnel were able to attend the event. In addition, because FCC personnel attended, it appears that the Commission's *ex parte* rules require a disclosure if matters discussed implicate a pending Commission proceeding. See 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206(b), Note 1. Pursuant to that section, I submit a summary of the information presented during the panel discussion. In addition, if possible, the sponsors of the event will submit a taped transcript into the record when and if one becomes available.

The panel participants were as follows:

- The moderator for the panel discussion was *Linda Foley*, President of The Newspaper Guild.
- *Professor Douglas Gomery* of the University of Maryland School of Journalism and published author of various works on media concentration will release his recent paper – commissioned by the Economic Policy Institute–entitled "The FCC's Newspaper-Broadcast Cross-Ownership Rule: An Analysis."
- *Mark Cooper*, Research Director, Consumer Federation of America will speak to the current state of media concentration and how repeal of the cross-ownership ban will worsen market conditions.
- *Belva Davis*, the first African-American female broadcaster on the west coast and widely respected, six-time local Emmy award winner media personality, will comment on her personal experiences at a San Francisco cross-owned (Chronicle) television station and the adverse impact on employment opportunities caused by consolidation.
- *Edward Fouhy*, five time national Emmy winner, former CBS news director, CBS and ABC Vice president and Washington Bureau Chief, founding member of the Pew Center on Civic Journalism and currently Executive Director with the Pew Center on the States will also offer his views.

- *Wade Henderson*, Executive Director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, will address the concerns of the nation's minority communities as they relate to localism in news coverage and diversity in news broadcasting.
- *Stephen Kimber*, Professor of Journalism and Director of the Kings College School of Journalism (Halifax, Nova Scotia) who recently resigned his columnist position with the Halifax Daily News in protest over the censorship actions of CanWest, Canada's largest media conglomerate.

The views of Professor Gomery and Mr. Cooper are already present in the record. Professor Gomery's paper was submitted as an attachment to the AFL-CIO's reply comments in this docket. Mr. Cooper's view are represented in the comments and reply comments of Consumer Federation of America in this docket. A summary of the remaining participants' presentations follows:

*Ms. Foley.* The Newspaper Guild represents 20,000 working journalists. Repealing the newspaper-broadcast rule will result in unintended consequences that prioritize elevated profits over quality journalism. The quality of journalism and its content is driven by who makes the final decisions – the owners of newspapers and media. Surveys of journalists show that the values of journalists and top media management and owners diverge.

*Ms. Davis.* Earlier in her career at a cross-owned stations, newspaper journalists could not even enter the building of the television station, this is no longer the case. When efforts to centralize operations among the newspaper, television station, and Internet sites began, newspaper reporters began appearing on the air. Newspaper reporters felt uncomfortable with this new role. There was no original reporting for the Internet site. Because television personnel are more ethnically and racially diverse than newspaper reporters, the movement of newspaper reporters to the air will reduce the diversity of television reporters. The unions were instrumental in ensuring that appropriate compensation was granted to reporters that began performing extra duties.

*Mr. Fouhy.* Mr. Fouhy's personal experience reveals that when decisions were made in 1967 at CBS about the cost of covering the war in Vietnam, the network agreed to "spend what it takes." In 1991 CNN decided to spend money covering the war in Iraq with a similar priority system. That priority on spending what is necessary to produce quality journalism is no longer present. Companies that dedicate a small percentage of their resources to journalism will not promote quality journalism if it is at the expense of profit. Democracy is a living organism and journalism is the oxygen that it needs to breathe. Journalism is different from simple commentary, journalism is information gathered, validated, and analyzed. Mr. Fouhy's current project, which is a news site that covers the actions in the 50 state capitals is not profitable – it is being funded by foundations. Consolidation often leads to cuts in reporting staff, particularly at the state government level, yet important decisions such as patients bills of rights, and education are decided at the state level.

*Mr. Henderson.* In 1964 in Jackson, Miss., the local television station would not cover African-Americans fairly, would not interview candidates or allow them to air advertisements. The civil rights movement and the United Church of Christ filed petitions at the FCC and brought litigation to ensure that station served the public interest. The media is important because it shapes public

opinion and motivates people to participate in political decision-making. We know through quantitative studies that African-Americans are more likely to participate if they have access to media that targets their interests. Left to its own devices, the industry is unlikely to adequately represent a multicultural society.

*Mr. Kimber.* The example of CanWest is an example of what could happen in the United States if the newspaper-broadcast rule is repealed. CanWest dominates Canadian media. It owns cross-owned television stations and newspapers in 17 Canadian cities. It operates the third-most popular Internet site. Each morning the jointly operated newspapers and television stations decide which stories they will cover and what approach they will take with the story. CanWest dictates the editorial policy of each of its papers. No paper can contradict a national CanWest editorial position. For example, CanWest will not allow pro-Palestinian positions and will not tolerate criticism of the current governing party of Canada. CanWest editors have altered signed columns and news coverage to comport with its editorial policies. Reporters who have removed their bylines from stories in protest have been fired.

This summary is based on notes taken during the presentation and have not been reviewed by the participants. Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. §1.1206(b), I am submitting an electronic copy of this summary today.

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Leanza  
Deputy Director